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## A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

Continued from page 9

out. Whereupon I stuck my head through the half-open door.

"Oh, it's you!" she cried, in a quavering voice. She was leaning forward in the chair, her eyes wide open and eager.

I advanced into the room. A look of doubt sprang into her face. She stared for a moment, and then rather piteously rubbed her eyes.

"Yes, it is I," said I, spreading my arms in such a way that my hands emerged from the confines of Poopendyke's sleeves. "It is still I, Countess, despite the shrinkage."

"The shrinkage?" she murmured, slowly sliding out of the chair and limping toward me, her hand extended.

"Yes, I always shrink when I get wet," I explained, resorting to facetiousness.

Then I bent over her hand and kissed it. As I neglected to release it at once, the cuff of Poopendyke's best coat slid down over our two hands, completely enveloping them. It was too much for me to stand. I squeezed her hand with painful fervor, and then released it in trepidation.

"Poopendyke goes to church in it," I said vaguely. "You've been crying!" Her eyes were red and suspiciously moist.

As she met my concerned gaze, a wavering, whimsical smile crept into her face. "It has been a disgustingly wet night," she said. "Oh, you don't know how happy I am to see you standing here once more, safe and sound, and—and amiable! I expected you to glower and growl and—"

"On a bright, glorious, sunshiny morning like this?" I cried. "Never! I prefer to be graciously refulgent. Our troubles are behind us."

"How good you are!" After a moment's careful scrutiny of my face, "I can see traces of very black thoughts, Mr. Smart, and recent ones."

"They were black until I came into this room," I confessed. "Now they are rosetinted."

She bent her slender body a little toward me, and the red seemed to leap back into her lips as if propelled by magic. Resolutely I put my awkward, ungainly arms behind my back, and straightened my figure.

"Your mother is here," I remarked hurriedly.

She glanced toward my bedroom door. "Oh, what a night!" she sighed. "I did all that I could to keep her out of your bed. It was useless. I did cry, Mr. Smart. I know you must hate all of us."

I laughed. "Love thy neighbor as thyself," I quoted. "You are my neighbor, Countess, don't forget that. And it so happens that your mother is also my neighbor at present, and your brothers too. Have you any cousins and aunts?"

"I can't understand how anyone can be so good natured as you," she sighed. "And now I am ready to accept an invitation to breakfast. I am disgustingly hungry."

"And so am I!" I cried with enthusiasm.

I shall never forget that enchanted breakfast—never! Not that I can recall even vaguely what we had to eat, or who served it, or how much of the naked truth I related to her in describing the events of the night: I can only declare that it was a singularly light-hearted affair.

AT half-past one o'clock I was received by Mrs. Titus in my own study. The Countess came down from her eery abode to officiate at the ceremonious function, and I was agreeably surprised to find my new guest in a most amiable frame of mind. True, she looked me over with what seemed an unnecessarily and perfectly frank stare of curiosity; but, on sober reflection, I did not hold it against her. I was still draped in Poopendyke's garments.

As for her two sons, they made no effort to disguise their amazement. The elder of the two young men, Colingraft Titus, who, being in the business with his father in New York, was permitted to travel most of the time so that he couldn't interfere with it, was taller than I, and an extremely handsome chap to boot. He was twenty-six. The younger, Jasper, Jr., was nineteen, short and slight of build, with the merriest eyes I've ever seen. I didn't in the least mind the grin he bestowed upon me,—and preserved with stanch fidelity throughout the whole interview,—but I resented the supercilious, lordly scorn of his elder brother. Jasper, I learned, was enduring a protracted leave of absence from Yale.

Mrs. Titus, after thanking me warmly, and I think sincerely, for all I had done for Aline, apologized in a perfunctory sort of way for having kept me out of my bed all night, and hoped that I wouldn't catch cold or have an attack of rheumatism. I soon

awoke to the fact that she was in the habit of centralizing attention. The usually volatile Countess became subdued and repressed in her presence; the big son and the little one were respectfully quiescent; I confess to a certain embarrassment myself.

She was a handsome woman, with a young figure, a good complexion, clear eyes, wavy brown hair, and a rich, low voice, perfectly modulated. No doubt she was nearing fifty; but thirty-five would have been your guess, provided you were a bachelor.

I endeavored to set her mind at rest by politely reminding her that I couldn't have slept in the bed anyway, having been out all night, and she smilingly assured me that it was a relief to find a literary man who wasn't forever saying flat and stupid things.

I took them over the castle; that is, part of the castle. Mrs. Titus wouldn't climb stairs. She confessed to banting; but drew the line at anything more exhausting. I fear I was too palpably relieved when she declined to go higher than the second story.

"It isn't necessary, Mr. Smart," she said sweetly, "to go into the history of the wretched Rothhoefens, as a Cook's interpreter might do. You see, I know the castle quite well, and I have had all the late news from my daughter."

"Of course," I agreed. "Stupid of me not to remember that you are descended from—"

"Mother isn't half so stuck up about it as you might think, Mr. Smart," interrupted Jasper, Jr., glibly. "She prefers to let people think her ancestors were Dutch instead of merely German. Dutch ancestors are the proper thing in New York."

"My ancestors were Dutch," said I quickly. "They came over with the original skin grafters."

She looked puzzled for a moment. The Countess laughed. Then Jasper saw the point. Colingraft was the last to see it, and then it was too late for him to smile.

We had tea in the loggia, and I dined with the family in the Countess's apartment at eight that night. I think Mrs. Titus was rather favorably impressed when she beheld me in my own raiment.

Everything went very well that evening. We were all in fine humor, and the dinner was an excellent one. I perpetrated only one unhappy blunder. I asked Mrs. Titus if she knew the Riley-Werkheimers and the Rocksworths in New York.

"Visually," she said succinctly, and I made haste to change the subject.

The Countess looked amused, and Colingraft said something about its being more than likely that we did not have any mutual acquaintances in New York. His sister came to my rescue with an amusing and exaggerated account of my experience with the Riley-Werkheimers and Rocksworths. Jasper was enthusiastic. Something told me that I was going to like him.

MY real trouble began the next day, and at the rather unseemly hour of eight o'clock in the morning. Colingraft came down the hall in a bathgown and slippers, banged on my bedroom door, and wanted to know why the blazes he couldn't have hot water for his bath. He was too full blooded and all that sort of thing, he said, to take a cold plunge. Moreover, he wasn't used to taking his tub in a tin cup. That was his sarcastic way of referring to my portable, handy bathtub. I asked him why he didn't ring for Britton, and he said he had, but that Britton was assisting Jasper in a wild chase for a bat that had got into the lad's room during the night.

"Thank your lucky stars it didn't get into Mother's room!" he said surlily.

He made such a row about his tub that I had to give him the pail of hot water Britton had placed in my bedroom, preparatory to my own bath.

At breakfast Jasper complained about the bats. He couldn't for the life of him see why I didn't have screens in the windows.

Later on Mrs. Titus, who had coffee and toast in her room, joined us on the loggia and announced that the coffee was stone cold. Moreover, she did not like the guest chamber into which she had been moved by order of the Countess. It was too huge for a bed chamber, and the iron window shutters creaked all night long.

"But don't you love the view you have of the Danube?" I queried rather mournfully.

"I don't sit in the window all night, Mr. Smart," she said tartly.

I at once insisted on her resuming possession of my bedroom, and promptly had all my things moved into the one she had occupied during the night. When the Countess heard of this arrangement she was most

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